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THE CONFLICT OF EUROPEAN NATIONS IN THE PACIFIC

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HENRY MORSE STEPHENS

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

The Conflict of European Nations in the Pacific Ocean

H. Morse Stephens

The completion of the Panama-Pacific Canal opens the fourth chapter in the history of the Pacific Ocean. Since the Asiatic and American peoples seem to have had no regular intercourse across the Ocean, even if occasional fishermen may have been blown from shore to shore by the winds, the first chapter opened with the coming of Europeans almost simultaneously to gaze upon the Pacific Ocean from both east and west, at the beginning of the sixteenth century. For about two hundred years the Ocean remained a Spanish lake, disturbed only by the intervention of adventurers, explorers, and pirates of other nations. Then came the second chapter, the chapter of conflict between the nations of Europe, which closed when the Spanish-American countries, the United States of America, and the Dominion of Canada occupied the American coast-line of the Ocean. The third chapter covers the greater part of the nineteenth century, during which Europe made spasmodic efforts among the islands and in China to secure a foothold, and the power of New Japan arose. This epoch now ends. The completion of the Panama Canal has brought Europe into closer touch with the Pacific Ocean; the old isolation of the American coast of the Pacific has come to an end; and new problems have arisen for merchants and politicians alike.

The Panama-Pacific Historical Congress owes its being to the recognition that an historical period closes with the completion of the Canal, and had it not been for the state of affairs in Europe many distinguished European historians would have been present to signify in papers and discussions their views as to the earliest history of the Pacific Ocean. But, despite discouragement, it has been resolved to hold the Panama-Pacific Historical Congress as it has been resolved to hold the Panama-Pacific Exposi-

tion. It is true that only two governments, one European and the other Asiatic, have sent special delegates to the Congress, but these are the governments of the two nations vitally interested in the history of the Pacific Ocean. Spain, which so long dominated the Pacific, has sent as its delegate Professor Rafael Altamira y Crevea, and Japan, whose entrance into Pacific Ocean politics is the significant fact of its history in the nineteenth century, has sent Professor Murakami. We welcome both of them. The brief address that follows is an attempt to deal with the second chapter in the history of the Pacific Ocean, and its intent is to show that the period of the eighteenth century in the Pacific can only be understood in relation to the history of Europe.

The history of the Pacific Ocean is a chapter in the history of civilization. The earliest civilizations that faced the Pacific Ocean faced it from the East. This is not the place to deal with the various reasons which prevented the civilizations of Asia, the ancient civilizations of China, Japan, Siam, and Malaya from attempting to cross the Pacific Ocean from East to West. That there may have been contact between the Chinese and other Asiatic peoples with America is one of the problems of archæology and ethnology. But it is perfectly certain that there could not have been any regular communication, although there may have been contact, between the Asiatic civilizations of the Eastern coast of the Pacific Ocean and the Indian tribes of the American Continent. The problem of the civilization of the islands of Polynesia and Melanesia and of the islands of the South Sea, together with the more specific problem of Malay influences and of the development of population in Australia and New Zealand, are likewise problems which the archæologist and the ethnologist may eventually solve. The legends of the Maoris of New Zealand and of many Polynesian peoples indicate familiarity with the geography of the Pacific Ocean and bear traces of an early knowledge of the American Continent. The famous stone images of Easter Island indicate a vanished civilization in the heart of the South Pacific Ocean, but even the most learned of archæologists have not yet penetrated the secret of the earliest civilizations of the Pacific Ocean. It has been suggested that the solution of the problem of the absence of communication between the advanced civiliza-

tion of Asia and the American Continent is to be found in a study of the currents that prevail in the Pacific Ocean. We know that the Chinese and Malays were daring sailors in their own difficult waters, but they never attempted any systematic communication with the American Continent from East to West.

The beginning of knowledge of the geography of the Pacific Ocean and of regular communication between its Asiatic and its American populations was reserved for a time when European peoples first faced each other across the unknown width of the Pacific Ocean. It was reserved for European peoples to traverse those wastes of water and to establish regular communications. It is a significant fact that the two great peoples who opened the era of European exploration into the unknown regions of further Asia and America, visited the Pacific Ocean at about the same time in the beginning of the sixteenth century. The romantic age of exploration covers the end of the fifteenth and the early part of the sixteenth centuries. During the fifteenth century, the Portuguese under the inspiration of Prince Henry the Navigator learned the fine art of navigation in slowly working southward along the Western coast of Africa, and, having turned the Cape of Good Hope, opened direct communication by sea with India and the Further East. The epoch-making voyage of Vasco da Gama in 1498 brought the Portuguese mariners directly from Lisbon to India, and eleven years later, in 1509, a squadron of Portuguese ships entered the port of Malacca, and thus approached the Pacific Ocean from the East. In 1511, Affonso de Alboquerque took possession of the city of Malacca and during the next six years the Portuguese not only explored the Spice Islands and the coasts of Siam and of China, but came into contact with the problem of the Pacific. At identically the same time, the Spanish explorers of the American Continent faced the Pacific Ocean from the West. In 1513, Balboa looked upon the Pacific Ocean at the very time when a young Portuguese gentleman named Magellan was serving under the Portuguese flag in the Spice Islands. The early Spanish *conquistadores* speedily explored the American coast of the Pacific Ocean both North and South, but it was reserved for Magellan to cross the ocean from America to Asia. Since the ideas of Magellan were not welcome

to the Portuguese, it was under the flag of Spain that he undertook his adventurous voyage in 1519. In 1520 he passed through the straits from the Atlantic to the Pacific which now bear his name, and in 1521 he successfully accomplished the purpose of his voyage. The example of Magellan was followed by other Spanish navigators, but the most important event in the history of the Pacific Ocean, which was to determine the character of its control and trade for two hundred years, was the occupation of the Philippine Islands by an expedition from Mexico under Legazpi in 1565. Between 1565 and 1572 Legazpi definitely won the Philippine Islands for the Spanish crown, and from that time onwards these islands remained under the control of Spain and their trade was regulated by the annual Manila galleons which crossed the Pacific Ocean by an old and well-defined route, sailing north into the latitude of northern California, which avoided contact with numerous islands of the South Pacific. The politics of Europe now interfered for the first time, as they were to interfere so often afterwards, in the question of the dominance of the trade of the Pacific Ocean.

It is quite impossible to understand the history of the Pacific Ocean without bearing in mind at every stage the history of the States of Europe, for it was conditions in Europe which definitely decided the control of the Pacific Ocean. In 1580 Portuguese independence disappeared and Portugal and its possessions in Africa, Asia, and America passed under the sway of Philip II of Spain. This eliminated for sixty years a possible rivalry between the Portuguese from Asia and the Spaniards from America for the control of the Pacific Ocean. The possession of the Philippine Islands assured the control of communication by the north route to Spain; and, the Portuguese being exhausted by their great efforts as explorers, adventurers, and traders, it looked as if the amalgamation of Spain and Portugal into one monarchy had definitely assured united control of the Pacific Ocean to the mighty power of the Spanish Hapsburgs. But new and unexpected complications arose. Resistance to the Spanish power developed among the English and the Dutch. In the long fight that the sailors of Queen Elizabeth carried on against Spain, one striking episode was the voyage of Sir Francis Drake, who entered the

Pacific Ocean in 1578 by way of the Straits of Magellan and who took possession of California in the name of his queen as "New Albion" in 1579. After this daring raid into the "Spanish Lake," as the Pacific Ocean actually was, Drake crossed the ocean from West to East and safely returned to England. His example was followed by Cavendish and other adventurous sailors, but the attention of English merchants, like the attention of Dutch merchants, was drawn rather to the successful trade in Asia than to a definite conflict with Spain upon the American coast of the Pacific Ocean. During the first half of the seventeenth century the English bent their endeavors to establish trade with those Asiatic lands that had been explored for more than a century by the Portuguese. Their chief rivals were the Dutch merchants, and, after the Massacre of Amboyna in 1623, a rough delimitation was made which left the English to found their trade and power in India, while the Dutch took the control of the Further East. It was from the Dutch Asiatic capital at Batavia in Java that the exploration of the Southern Pacific Ocean was directed. The great field, that the Spaniards had neglected from the choice of the northern route between Manila and Mexico, was now occupied by the Dutch. It was Dutch sailors who left their names in the Southern Pacific. It is true that the great continent named by them "New Holland" is now called Australia, but the name New Zealand shows its Dutch origin and the Island of Tasmania is called after the greatest of Dutch explorers, Abel Tasman. But the Dutch were not satisfied with exploring the Southern Pacific. They likewise broke their way into the Pacific Ocean through the Straits of Magellan, and it was from a little Dutch sailing port that Cape Horn took its name. Side by side with the competitive trade of the English and the Dutch in Asia and the Further East came battering blows of English and Dutch adventurers against the Spanish monopoly of America. The buccaneers of the West Indies and the Caribbean Sea, who preyed upon the Spanish connection across the Atlantic from Spanish-America to Europe, were matched by the Dutch Pichilingues, a band of pirates, who, with their headquarters in Lower California, attacked the communications between Mexico and the Philippine Islands across the Pacific with as much ardor as the buccaneers

attacked Spanish fleets and settlements upon the Atlantic Coast. To understand the meaning of the success of these attempts, it is necessary to bear in mind the decay of the Spanish power in Europe during the seventeenth century. The Spain of Philip III and Philip IV could not sustain the efforts of its governors and viceroys to beat off the attacks of the English and Dutch pirates and adventurers, or maintain the monopoly of trade against the trading skill of the Dutch and English merchants. A glance at the state of Europe in the seventeenth century shows the grasp by the Dutch and English of the meaning of "sea power," and, although no great Dutch or English fleets entered the Pacific Ocean, the principle of the control of the seas was first grasped by these maritime nations. Germany, divided into many States and ravaged by the Thirty Years' War, took no part in the competition for the world's trade, and it was left to Dutchmen and Englishmen, mainly, to batter down the portals of Spanish monopoly in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The occupation of the Island of Jamaica in 1655 by Oliver Cromwell marked the commencement of English colonization by conquest; while the Dutch East India Empire extended from Batavia over the Spice Islands, and was based upon the united support given by the Dutch people to their East India Company.

During the latter part of the seventeenth century, the dominating figure in European politics was Louis XIV of France, and it is only by understanding the relations between France and Spain that it is possible to realize how France became the first successful competitor of Spain upon the Pacific Ocean. The latter part of the seventeenth century is the great age of French expansion as well as of French literature. Not only did daring Frenchmen explore the Saint Lawrence and the Mississippi, but their activities extended also to the Pacific Ocean. The designs of Louis XIV upon Spain, which were intended to bring about an absolute union under the Bourbons of the French and Spanish monarchies, were marked by periods of war and periods of peace. It was after the treaty of Ryswick in 1697 that Louis XIV began to encourage the movement of French sailors into the Pacific Ocean. This little-known episode of the history of the Pacific Ocean has been worked out by a noted Swedish scholar, Dahlgren. He, first of

scholars, looked over the documents dealing with the French in the Pacific Ocean and showed how, during the alliance, French merchants made their way up the Pacific Coast from the Straits of Magellan and broke into the Spanish monopoly of trade there. In 1706 the King of France gave authority under a charter to a Frenchman named Danycan to establish a settlement on the "Island of California" as headquarters of the French trade in the Pacific Ocean. But again European diplomacy interfered. By the Treaties of Utrecht, the crowns of France and Spain were recognized as Bourbon crowns, but the separation of the two states was maintained. France, as the ally of Spain, could not continue its incursions into the "Spanish Lake," which was the Pacific Ocean; therefore, the activities of French sailors and merchants there came to an end, and the Spanish Bourbon government, like the previous Spanish Hapsburg government, fell back into a quiet consciousness that there was no need to defend its Pacific Ocean monopoly. The Manila galleons peacefully crossed the Pacific year by year, and Spain, backed by France, felt no need to prepare for defence.

But the Treaties of Utrecht had given the English merchants certain rights of trade with Spanish-America, and the ambitions of English merchants had been aroused by the tales which had come through France of the wealth of the Pacific. Then was founded the famous South Sea Company, whose financial troubles form an interesting episode in English financial history; but the South Sea Company was rather a scheme of financiers than a union of traders, and while the London East India Company was slowly building up the power which eventually founded the Indian Empire, the London South Sea Company was mainly interested in looking after the prices of stock upon the stock exchange.

The quarter century of peace which followed the Treaties of Utrecht was broken in 1740 by the war known as the War of the Austrian Succession. One of the most famous episodes of this war was Anson's incursion into the Pacific Ocean and his capture of one of the Manila galleons. This proved to the English government the weakness of Spain in the Pacific and prepared the way for further schemes of aggression into the "Spanish

Lake." During the years of war that followed, English statesmen and merchants cast their eyes longingly upon the Pacific Ocean, and their activities culminated in the capture of Manila by General Draper in 1762. The East India Company backed this expedition and hoped to retain, if not Manila itself, at least a footing in the Philippine Islands as a base for trade in the Further East and in the Pacific Ocean. Nearly one hundred years earlier, the East India Company under the administration of Sir Josiah Child, had made a settlement at Amoy in China in 1677 with the same hope, but like Amoy a century earlier, Manila was abandoned by the English, who found enough to occupy themselves at this time in the growth of their power in India to prevent further efforts in the Further East. The Dutch had fallen from their high estate as a great maritime power and were now satisfied with the profits of their trade with Java, Sumatra, and the Spice Islands. But, although the English and the Dutch had been temporarily eliminated in 1763, a new giant power was moving towards the Pacific Ocean. Peter the Great of Russia had divided the civilized world into Europe, Asia, and Russia, and upon his world map was marked the hope of the control of all Siberia. During his reign, the Russians reached the Northern Pacific, and it was under his directions that Vitus Bering began the famous discoveries which completed the knowledge of the extreme Northern Pacific before Bering's death in 1741. During the next twenty-five years, the Russians steadily moved down the coast of Alaska and threatened to make their way as far as the Spanish settlements upon the Pacific Coast.

After the conclusion of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Charles III, the enlightened king of Spain, resolved to make a great effort to maintain the Spanish monopoly in the Pacific Ocean. On the one hand Don Gaspar de Portolá was sent north along the coast in 1769 to occupy and take possession of the coast of California towards which the Russians were advancing; while on the other hand the viceroy of Peru sent out a special expedition in 1770 to take possession of such islands in the South Pacific as might threaten the Spanish monopoly of the western coast of South America. The policy of Charles III showed that the Spaniards were alive to the dangers pressing upon them from all directions.

The capture of Manila by the English, and the advance of the Russians, made a definite policy necessary, and the last age of Spanish exploration is made illustrious by the various voyages up the North Pacific Coast from San Blas to Alaska and by the voyage of Don Felipe González to Easter Island. But it was too late. The monopoly of the Pacific could not longer be maintained. This is not the place to enter upon the history of the Nootka Sound affair, except to point out that the trade influence which led up to it was the first definite attempt of the English merchants to get a share of the trade across the Pacific Ocean. Even more significant was the result of the three famous voyages of Captain Cook, which, after tracing the boundaries of New Holland and New Zealand, culminated in 1788 with the establishment of a penal colony at Botany Bay under Governor Phillip, and thus led to the definite establishment of English influence in the Southern Pacific through the occupation of Australia.

The wars of the French Revolution and of the Napoleonic period withdrew European interest from the Pacific Ocean, and for a time ended the conflict of European nations in that ocean. When the curtain rose again after the overthrow of the Napoleonic Empire in 1814, a new series of contestants for the control of the Pacific Ocean appeared. In the place of Spain, there developed the Spanish-American Republics of Mexico, Peru, and Chile, not to speak of the minor republics of Central America. To the North had arisen the Republic of the United States of America, whose skippers soon penetrated the harbors of the Northern Pacific and the Islands of Polynesia on both whaling and missionary enterprises. The English definitely established themselves in the Malay Peninsula, where Stamford Raffles founded the city of Singapore; and the rapid colonization of Australia and New Zealand established a definite English sphere of influence in the South Pacific. It is not the purpose of this paper to deal with the details of the conflict in the Pacific Ocean during the nineteenth century. It has been rather its purpose to point out the various stages of that conflict up to the nineteenth century. So far as the American coast of the Pacific Ocean was concerned, the greatest events were the definite establishment of the United

States in California by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848; the definite establishment of England in British Columbia, which was recognized by the Treaty of 1846; while Russia eliminated herself by the sale of Alaska in 1867. In the place of the old powers of Spain and Portugal, the Protestant Netherlands and France, Russia and Great Britain, whose headquarters were in Europe and whose interests were mainly European, there definitely appeared by the middle of the nineteenth century a series of specifically American powers, with purely American interests, upon the American side of the Pacific Ocean, in the existence of such States as Chile and Peru, Mexico, the United States and Canada. On the Asiatic side of the Pacific Ocean, the appearance of Japan as a great power and the regeneration of China, half a century later, meant that the question of the dominion of the Pacific Ocean was not to be settled simply by the American States, but by American and Asiatic States. In the Southern Pacific, a new power had arisen in the English colonies of Australia and New Zealand; and the Polynesian Islands formed the theatre of a conflict in which France and Germany took part. The most significant affair of all was, however, the occupation of the Philippine Islands by the United States of America in 1898. By this, the old tradition that the Philippine Islands, though geographically part of Asia, were politically part of America, was maintained; and the problem was set to the United States, which had formerly been faced by Spain, of maintaining a connection across the Pacific Ocean from East to West and West to East.

The purpose of this address has been fulfilled if attention has been drawn by it to the importance of studying European history for the understanding of one period of the Pacific Ocean. The conflict of European powers for the control of the Pacific came to an end with the eighteenth century. The nineteenth century has witnessed rather the conflict of American and Asiatic powers, with but slight intrusion of strictly European ideas in the occupation of Tahiti by the French, of the Fiji Islands by the English, and of part of Samoa, part of New Guinea, Tsing Tau, and the Solomon Islands by Germany. The Canadian Dominion and the Australian Commonwealth may be regarded in their interests in the Pacific as independent States, rather than as subject col-

onies; and the problem of the Pacific in the twentieth century may be that of conflict between American and Asiatic powers, with only American and Asiatic interests, since the direct influence of European States has for the moment entirely disappeared. What will be the result of the opening of the Panama-Pacific Canal? Will Europe again intervene politically or commercially? Will the fourth chapter in the history of the Pacific Ocean resemble the second or the third? One thing at least is certain — that an epoch in the history of the Pacific Ocean is closed.

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